

have more to say about that even—tonight or tomorrow night?—tomorrow night at the retirement dinner.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Today, Mr. President, the Senate reaches an important milestone. We will confirm our 89th and 90th judicial nominees to serve lifetime appointments on the Federal bench. Starting at noon, the Senate will hold a total of four rollcall votes throughout the afternoon on the nominations of Frances Behm to the Eastern District of Michigan and Kelley Hodge to the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

We are on pace to finish this year with more judges confirmed to the bench than were confirmed in the first 2 years of either of the previous two administrations. These nominees stand out not just in their numbers but also in their groundbreaking diversity. Almost 50 percent of the judges we have confirmed are women of color—50 percent. That has never happened before, and I am confident that a more diverse bench will go a long way in cultivating trust in our courts and in our democracy.

Just as important, once we confirm the nominations of Tamika Montgomery-Reeves and Dana Douglas very soon, the Senate will also have confirmed a total of 11 Black women to serve as appellate judges, by far the most ever under any single President.

Before President Biden, only 8 such nominees had been confirmed in total, and now, in our first 2 years, we are already on the brink of confirming 11.

Today, our Federal judiciary is far more balanced, far more diverse, and far more experienced than the one our country had 2 years ago. It is something we are very proud of. You can rest assured, Mr. President, that Senate Democrats are going to maintain this priority on judges as the 118th Congress begins next year.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, on government funding, off the floor, negotiations continue between both parties on charting a path toward fully funding the government for the next fiscal year. I spent much of the day yesterday going from one meeting to the next, sitting down first with Leader McCONNELL and his team and then with Speaker PELOSI and her team, and I stayed on the phone throughout the evening as Senators worked to bridge the gap on funding.

We are working very hard on getting something done before the deadline, but there is a lot of negotiating left to do. Both sides understand that fully funding the government is extremely important and anything less risks harm to our troops and the Federal Government's ability to serve the public. We don't want to see that outcome so both sides must remain at the table and continue working.

Tomorrow, Senators will attend a classified briefing on the latest developments on the war in Ukraine. I hope it sinks in for all Members in attend-

ance just how critical U.S. aid has been, not just for our allies but for our own protection. I hope it sinks in that this is one of the most important reasons why we must reach an agreement.

It is not an easy process, but it is supremely important nonetheless. For the well-being of our troops, for the preservation of our national security, and for the tens of millions of Americans who look to the Federal Government for a wide range of basic services, Democrats and Republicans must work together to fully fund the Federal Government.

CHIPS AND SCIENCE ACT

Mr. President, now on CHIPS and Science, today, President Biden will be in Arizona to visit the construction site for what will become one of the largest chip manufacturing plants in America. What was originally announced to be a \$12 billion investment will now be a \$40 billion project, with the first chip fab set to open a year from now.

This is one of the highly visible examples of how the bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act is already paying dividends for the economy, for job creators, and for American workers. It is a good sign for a new age of chip manufacturing in this country.

We used to lead the world in making microchips, and thanks to the CHIPS and Science Act, we are already seeing the types of investments that will make America a major hub—the major hub, hopefully—for chip manufacturing once again.

The construction site that President Biden visits today is just one example of some very exciting activity happening all across the country. In my home State of New York, Micron has pledged up to \$100 billion over the next two decades to build state-of-the-art semiconductor fabs in New York. Another major company, GlobalFoundries, has announced they will build a second fab in the Albany region of Upstate New York.

Of course, the benefits extend across America. We are seeing chipmakers announce multibillion-dollar investments in States ranging from Ohio to Colorado, to Texas, to Arizona—the Arizona one MARK KELLY did a great job of championing—to Idaho. In nearly all cases, executives have explicitly cited the passage of CHIPS and Science as a major factor in their decision to build big in America.

Though these many investments range in size and type, the bottom line on CHIPS and Science is this: more American jobs, increased American manufacturing, a stronger American economy in the long run. This bill is about innovating and building the future in the United States, not in the hands of the Chinese Communist Party.

As always, I thank my colleagues from both sides of the aisle who pushed this bill over the finish line. We are already reaping the immense benefits, and there will be many more to come.

CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL CEREMONY

Mr. President, before I conclude, I want to acknowledge that this is a solemn and special day here at the Capitol. Later this morning, congressional leadership will gather to award the Congressional Gold Medal in honor of the brave men and women of the U.S. Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police Department who defended the Capitol on January 6.

On that day, democracy faced maximum danger. These heroes responded with maximum valor, and all of us in the Senate and across the Capitol Complex are forever—forever—in their debt.

I will have more to say when I speak this morning at the Rotunda, but for now, I want to say thank you to Senators KLOBUCHAR and BLUNT, the chair and ranking member of the Senate Rules Committee, who worked together on legislation to award the gold medal to these highly worthy public servants. This award would not be possible without the work of Senators KLOBUCHAR and BLUNT, and I commend them for their work.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, well, here we are, again, into the month of December with crucial business unfinished. Republicans spent months urging the Democratic majority not to neglect this year's National Defense Authorization Act, not to leave our Armed Forces to the last minute.

Five months ago, I called on our colleagues to process the Defense bill as soon as possible; but, instead, the majority has prioritized not just gigantic partisan spending sprees, but also a parade of mid-level nominations.

The Democratic leader didn't even bring a Senate NDAA to the floor, forcing Senators REED and INHOFE to conduct an informal conference with the House with a weakened hand. When the Republicans controlled the government, we put our servicemembers first.

In 2017, the Senate passed our version of NDAA in September, and we had voice-voted the conference report by Thanksgiving. In 2018, the Republican Senate was completely finished with NDAA by early August. But on Democrats' watch, the Senate's schedule has not matched the Nation's needs. We have spent time on less important matters while both the authorization and funding for our servicemembers have languished until the eleventh hour.

Even now—even now—House and Senate Democrats are still obstructing